









and a settled policy were as essential to good government, that he would rather see a firm Minister holding his own, than one who, from his power, had the liberty over him with which he acted on matters of policy. Hence, he would not have endeavoured to distract the present possessors of office, had they pursued a consistent policy. The first serious complaint which he had to make was that in introducing his bill, he had not been able to do so in a proper and judicious way, even from a practical point of view, because it tended necessities, and was not designed to encourage new industries, or the cultivation of the soil. Where, he said pertinently, were the new industries created by the tariff? On the contrary the poor and the struggling, the ordinary operations of trade and commerce, had been hampered for years whenever.

As to the present state of things, Sir Henry pointed out that it was now the second day of the second month of the new year. Calling attention to the practice of the House of Commons, Sir Henry showed the evil of this prolonged session of Parliament. The Government, when it came into office, had a clear programme, and if it had been followed, there was no conceivable reason why all the happiness necessary should not have been done within the financial year. The inevitable result of letting the financial year go, of running last year into this, was to render it impossible to do any work at all, and to bring about a condition of confusion, and the other measures which the Government was determined to pass into law. Even the supporters of the Ministry who had hitherto cheered their chief hastened at this assertion, and several members on the other benches declared that they would do all the business possible to get rid of the bill, and the District Government Bill from passing into law.

The atmosphere

of Sir George's speech was electric, and

the audience

listened with bated breath.

He then referred to the importance of the

District Government Bill, and the other measures

which he had introduced.

Mr. McMillan gave a different tone to the debate,

referring, in his calm, critical way, to the utterances of the Premier as being full of political chaff-trap and misstatement. If such a speech,

said Mr. McMillan, represented the views of the Opposition, or of a considerable majority of the House, then the scores of members went to the country the better.

The attack which Sir George had made upon the financial administration of the Parkes Government naturally called for a reply from Mr. McMillan, who characterised the speech as a mere attack upon the late Ministry from the charge of robbery which had been so recklessly hurled against it, and then, returning on the present Government, exposed scathingly the modified state into which it had brought the finances of the District Government, the Coal Mines Regulation, and the Distillery Conduits Suppression Bills. The last named measure, in view of recent events, he should be made applicable to his Majesty's Ministers, and called attention to the fact that it was a component part of Sir George Dibbs. The numerous other measures on the Government's programme received attention, including what Sir Henry styled the inexplicable Land Bill. Without any exaggeration it would take Parliament fully three years to consider these bills fairly, and yet the Government would be called upon with any one of them. The only way in which it was even a portion of this business could have been dealt with would have been to have asked for the Appropriation Act last year, and then to have started an entirely new session, the one proper to the year, in May next.

In short, Sir Henry, using many metaphors, held that God had sent him a divine mission, sustained, supported by floating fire. Also, that it had got into a fatal quagmire, from which it would never be able to extricate itself. And the world was that the longer this state of affairs was allowed to continue, the more serious became the trouble, and if it continued, the business of the Legislature would be interfered with. The Ministerial scheme of retrenchment, he held, was unworthy of the name, and a grave error of policy had been committed by neglecting to provide for the acknowledged disease which existed among the working classes.

The financial position of the Government was claimed attention, and a warning issued by the Premier as to whether Dibbs or Parkes was really the author of the existing deficit. In all that, however, there was no attempt at serious financial criticism, merely assertion and counter-assertion, and Sir Henry was relied on to turn to the well-known pages of Adam Smith, quoting extracts from this famous economist in order to show that the income tax was a mistake in a young country. He would only suppose an income tax when necessary, and if the law which would restrain him held out, he would not be compelled to pay it.

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